

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Sand shimmying as predator avoidance behaviour in two agamid lizards, *Ctenophorus reticulatus* and *Ctenophorus femoralis* – On 27 May 2005 we initiated a brief herpetological survey of Pimbee Station (southern portion of the Shire of Carnarvon, just west of the boundary with the Shire of Upper Gascoyne), Western Australia. As we approached the station from the west along the Edagee Road we encountered an individual male *Ctenophorus reticulatus* (snout-vent length of 80 mm, mass 21.0 g). It was basking in open sun at 12:40 on the sandy middle portion of the road. The lizard was standing erect when first seen, but as we approached it dropped into a low sprawling position, then partly buried itself in loose sand with a rapid series of shimmying motions, and did not move until captured. The specimen in question was vouchered and is registered at the Western Australian Museum as WAM R167551. We observed similar behaviour elsewhere among individuals of *Ctenophorus femoralis* inhabiting the red dunal sands southeast of the Exmouth Peninsula.

Predator avoidance among agamids usually is facilitated by cryptic coloration, but flight or aggressive display are typical behaviours following detection (Greene 1988; Witten 1993). Cryptic coloration certainly is an

important predator avoidance mechanism for *Ctenophorus* species (Mitchell 1973; Stuart-Fox *et al.* 2004), but anti-predator behaviours within the group are not well documented. Although activity patterns, predatory, feeding, thermoregulatory, territorial, and reproductive behaviours of *C. maculosus* were discussed at length by Mitchell (1973), and *Ctenophorus nuchalis* was noted to use tail lashing and biting (Greene 1988), we are not aware of any previously published reports of the shimmying behaviour for predator avoidance in *Ctenophorus*.

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